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ANN: Dear Listeners, we continue the broadcasting with a commentary by Mr. Angelov. Today he will discuss the work of the National Assembly in connection with the handicraft services.

ANGELOV: Dear listeners, the problem of everyday and public services is as old as the Communist regime itself. The intervention of the National Assembly proved again how important it is in the lives of the people, as well as how much more needs to be done in order to obtain better results. All kinds of decrees, circular letters, corrections to the service prices, Party Plenum discussions and nationwide debates could not help too much to solve the problem. Why? Because "some basic regulations have been infringed," as the Premier insinuated two years ago in Smolyan. He was, however, not quite clear and that's why I have to make his words more comprehensible and to supplement them with some details. The first, so to speak, "regularity" was that in the very first days after coming to power the Communist regime declared craftsmanship--an independent stratum of small producers--to be its sworn enemy. That fact caused the following breaches of the regularities: the private-owned craftsman's workshops were closed; the small number of those who still worked could not go on with their existence because their edifices were confiscated; the extra taxes were too high, etc., etc. That's how the Communist regime bore the consequences of its dogmatism, no matter that the population suffered, being, in fact, without any handicraft services. On those ruins the regime tried to build up the state-run craftsman's and small-scale production cooperatives. The state-run enterprises have been turned into production establishments for ready-made products, the producers' cooperatives followed to a certain degree that course but the services, however, were not provided for. Speaking about the cooperatives, we should not forget the fact that in the very first days of their existence, those enterprises have been complicated by a bureaucratic unproductive staff, and its costs had to be paid by both the producers and population. But the Party was proud of the data: the whole production sector was socialized.

Dear listeners, lately there have been taken some steps to re-animate the handicraft services, or, as they are called these days, "the everyday and public services."

It is, however, not at all sufficient, although this was stated at National Assembly session. It would be appropriate to point to the fact that the main report of Minister Vladimir Videnov, as well as other reports and debates, too, proceeded dully--they fanned the breeze; at last, it was decided in the most banal way: the problem of the everyday services was to be transferred to the Council of Ministers.

What are the reasons, dear listeners, preventing the handicraft services from radical improvement? Summing up the speeches delivered at the National Assembly, as well as some articles published in the press, I could point to the following ones:

1. Lack of buildings, machinery, equipment, raw materials, and capital investments.

Let me draw your attention to these problems, before going on with pointing to other defects.

To begin with, the buildings. It is a problem which is a part of the incorrect civil engineering policy of the regime. The number of buildings for handicraft enterprises is far smaller in the outskirts; that's why there are complaints against some private craftsmen who started workshops right in the centers of the towns and cities. What else can they do? I've read the incredible complaint that 40 washing machines have been delivered in Sofia but, due to the lack of buildings, they were not yet installed and utilized. That problem is already solved in the West, dear listeners: there is no new building without automatic washers (and drying rooms, too) in the hygienic basements. Every housewife can use them by a chip, and in an hour the laundering is over--washed, dried, and ready for ironing; in the meantime, the housewife can do her housekeeping. Why is it impossible to do the same in Bulgaria? Besides all the other advantages, the washing machines return the capital invested in them very soon. As for the machinery, it is, dear listeners, a big gap in the regime's policy in connection with capital investments. The regime only has to be blamed for all those faults; the handicraft services are performed in Bulgaria by means of a hammer and a file, while in Western Europe they are done by machines (the universal cobbler's machine, for example) increasing from ten to about one hundred times the productivity of labor. The young Bulgarian mechanical engineering industry has to aim its efforts to producing such kinds of machines in order to find a place on the foreign markets, no matter what the demands of the home market. That's why it is necessary for some licenses to be bought; they are not all too expensive. A little bit richer imagination in that field, and there would be successes. The low quality of the services is a fault of the regime and of its erroneous policy: there are not sufficient quantities of high quality materials.

Another problem in connection with the handicraft services is the lack of cadres. Dear listeners, it is a problem in the West, too; here the young people prefer to work in the factories rather than to study years on end until they acquire the skill of a good craftsman. The only natural way of drawing more young people to craft work is higher labor remuneration.

The third problem is the so-called price-fixing process in the field of handicraft services. In the West the regulating factor is free competition: those who work more conscientiously, more efficiently, and in a less expensive manner will have more customers and more profits. Misappropriation is something too often spoken about: misappropriations on the part of the industrial combines and producers' cooperatives, and even on behalf of individual private craftsmen. It will be the same in the future, if there is no free competition, and the handicraft services are still in their stone age; it will be the same until the price-fixing process is adjusted to the increase in the prices of materials.

Dear listeners, there is no reason to point to any further faults of the regime's erroneous policy in connection with the handicraft services, but I cannot pass over in silence a problem which is very important; namely, the care for the handicraft services as a whole is not coordinated; this type of service is not at all supported or organized.

Many of the deputies to the National Assembly were of the opinion that the care of the handicraft services on the part of the state was neither good, nor effectively rendered by the Ministry of Architecture and Public Works. Maybe it is high time for the Premier to think over this so important problem, and to find out at last the way out. Maybe it would be better to establish a Committee of the Council of Ministers, or a Committee with the capacity of a separate Ministry, dealing with the whole sphere of the handicraft services? Moreover, it is high time, to be sure, for the private craftsmen to be allowed to establish their own trade union which will be their connection with the state authorities, and which will defend their interests. The private-owned craftsmanship has to be encouraged in a most resolute manner, especially in the towns, because the information about the situation is more than disturbing. In his capacity of Premier, Todor Zhivkov is responsible for the development of the handicraft services; now, when the National Assembly entrusted him with this problem, he has to work in order to find out its fast, correct, and just solution.